

ROUGHING IT WITH CHARLIE

The Charlie Company, 2nd Ranger Bn, Landing on OMAHA Beach

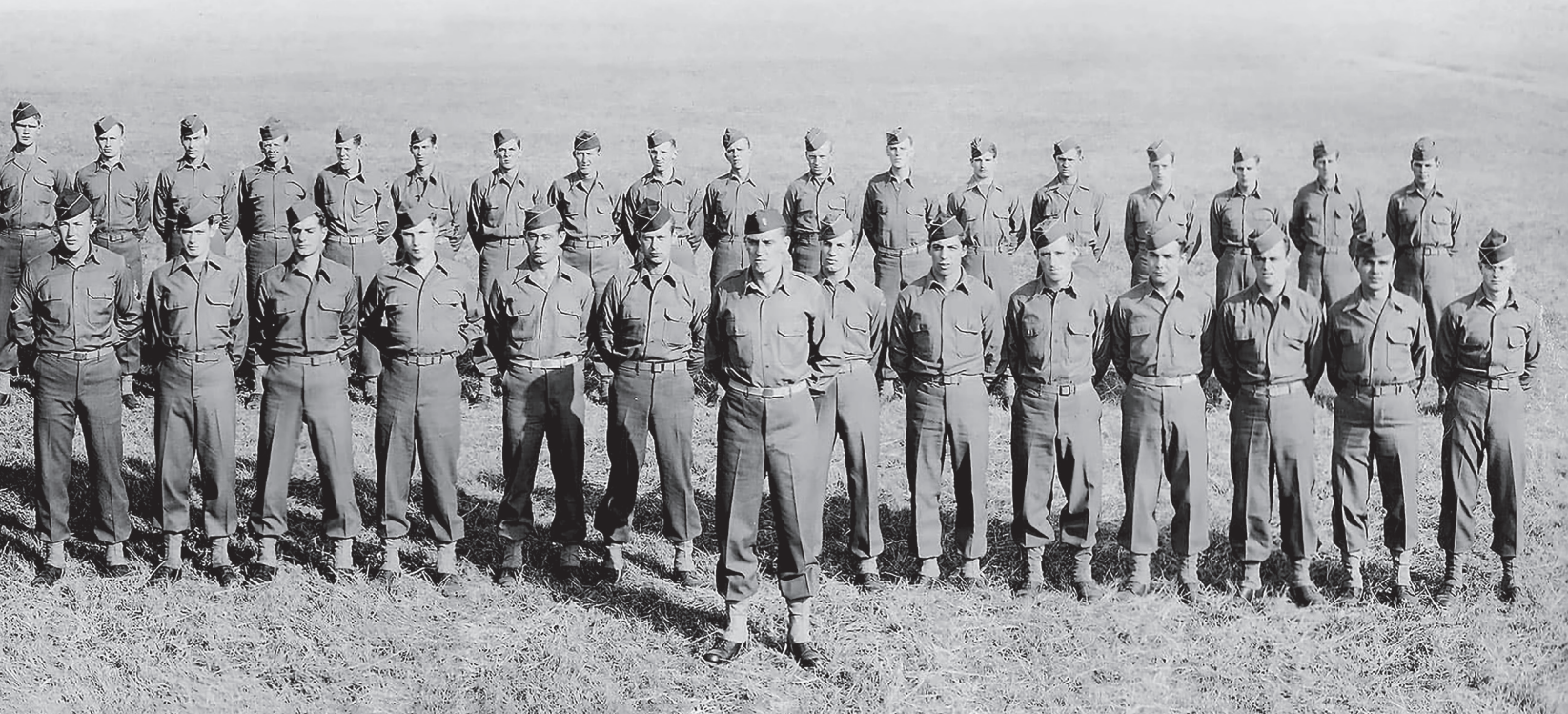
As USASOC honors the heroism and sacrifice of Allied soldiers in the 6 June 1944 invasion of Normandy, it is fitting to remember the service of the Rangers on D-Day. Two Ranger Battalions, the 2nd and 5th, participated in the landings. They were split into three groups, dubbed Force A, Force B, and Force C. The Commander of the 2nd Ranger Battalion and overall commander of the Provisional Ranger Force was Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) James E. Rudder, who led Force A. Composed of Companies D, E, and F, 2nd Rangers, Force A scaled the cliffs at Pointe du Hoc to seize the enemy guns believed to be emplaced there. After seizing the Pointe, LTC Rudder and his Rangers withstood heavy German resistance until relieved on 8 June. Force C, composed of Companies A and B, 2nd Rangers, and the 5th Ranger Battalion, under LTC Max F. Schneider, came ashore at the DOG WHITE sector of OMAHA Beach, and fought their way to and Vierville-sur-Mer,



LTC James E. Rudder

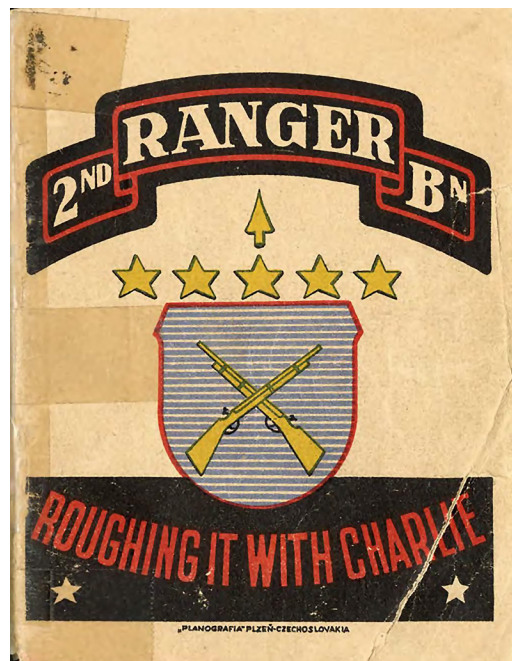


LTC James E. Rudder and the 2nd Rangers at Pointe du Hoc



*Not in the photo are Privates James E. Donahue, Wayne D. Goad, Fred W. Plumlee, David L. Goudey, and Technician 5 James A. Malhav, killed in action, and Private First Class Otto K. Stephens, who was wounded. They are not in this photo because it was taken before they were assigned to Company C. Stephens was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross on 16 October 1944 for his actions on 6-7 June 1944. He was killed by a shell burst in the Ardennes on 6 December 1944.

Thank you to Ms. Gina Caperton Ervin, Mr. Ron Hudnell, and Mr. Franck Maurouard for their assistance.

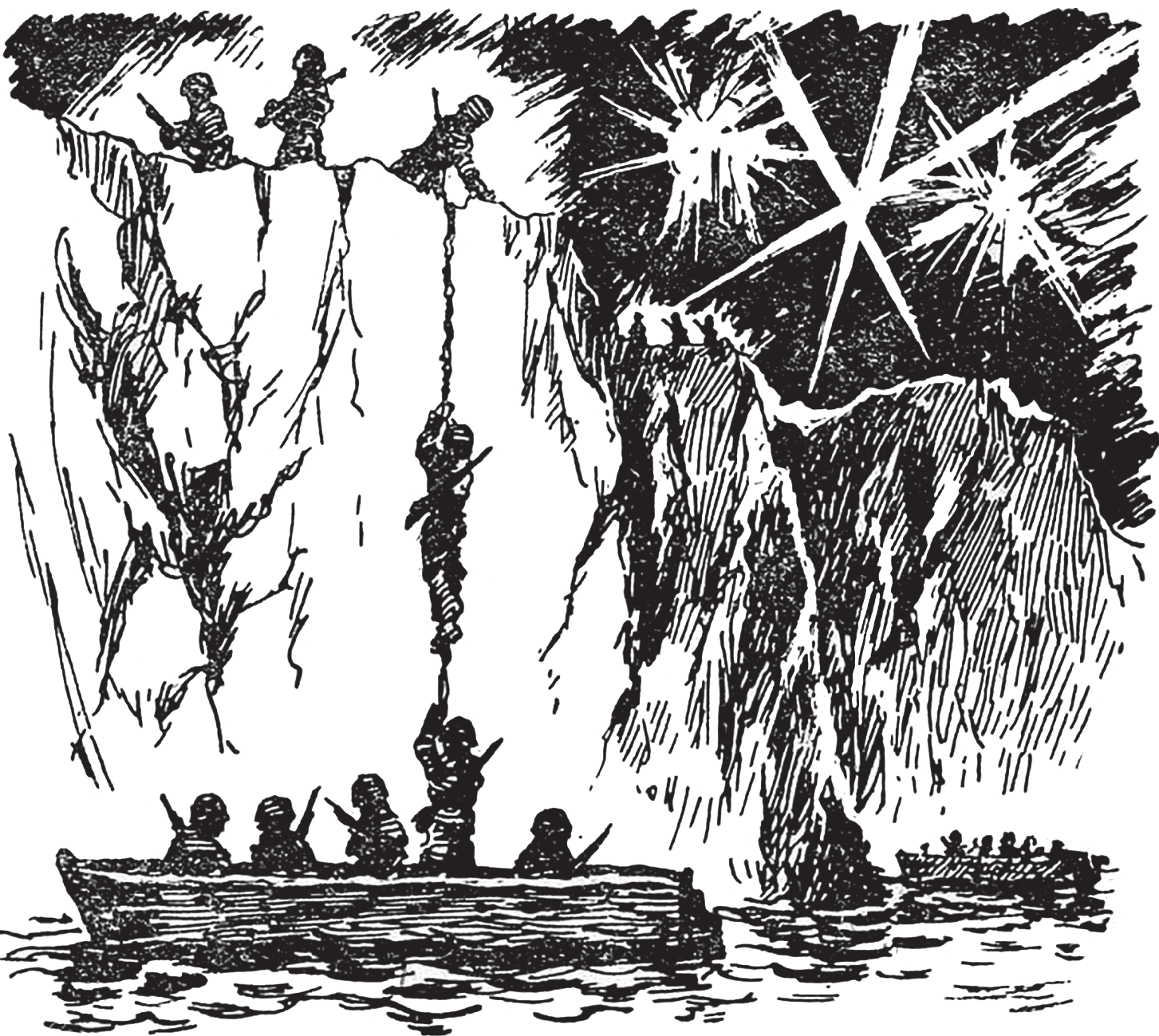


before being part of the force that eventually relieved LTC Rudder. Finally, Force B, consisting of C Company, 2nd Battalion, landed at OMAHA Beach. Its mission was to destroy German defensive positions on Point de la Percée and then fight their way to Pointe du Hoc. Unfortunately, things did not go according to plan.

The 68 men of Company C landed on OMAHA Beach in the first wave. They assaulted the CHARLIE sector at 0645 hours, as depicted in the film *Saving Private Ryan*. As the ramps went down on their landing craft, the Germans poured heavy gunfire into the Rangers. Still, in a testament to their intensive training and sheer will, about half of Company C managed to cross the beach and climb the steep cliffs. Once at the top, they eliminated German fighting positions, which helped succeeding waves of American troops to get ashore.

Staff Sergeant Marvin Lutz of Hickory, North Carolina, recalled, "Going across the beach was like a horrible nightmare, so many of my buddies were killed or wounded." The photograph above, taken at Fort Dix, New Jersey, in October 1943, a month before the 2nd Ranger Battalion deployed to England, depicts the cost of 6 June 1944. All told, Company C, 2nd Ranger Battalion, suffered 21 killed and 18 wounded: a casualty rate of 57 percent.*

Company C continued to fight through France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and into Germany. The company ended the war in Czechoslovakia. There, it produced a small company history, reproduced here. This copy of *Roughing It With Charlie* was in the effects of Corporal Willis C. Caperton, killed on 6 June 1944. It has been treasured by his family ever since and was later donated to the USASOC History Office. By sharing the booklet here, we hope to honor the Rangers of Company C who gave all to protect the freedom of others.



CHAPTER I: BUILDING THE TEAM

In the latter part of March 1943, selected men from all parts of the States and from different branches of the Army began to arrive in Camp Forrest, Tennessee, to form the nucleus of what was to be, known as the Second Ranger Infantry Battalion. On April 1, 1943, under the command of Major McDonald these selected men began their strenuous training to prepare themselves for combat and at the same time weed out any men who were physically unfit. The Battalion consisted of six line companies of sixty-five enlisted men and three (officers) plus Headquarters company. The entire personnel of the Battalion consisted of 517 officers and enlisted men or about one half of the strength of a regular infantry battalion.

The whole idea behind this Ranger Battalion was to get a unit capable of enduring prolonged hardship, creating havoc amongst the enemy where he least expected trouble, and generally speaking, to be twice as good and efficient as the men in the best Army in the world. Each man was specially trained for his own specific job and at the same time he had sufficient knowledge of all jobs in the Battalion to be able to take that job over and perform it efficiently in any case of emergency. Being all volunteers and eager for combat, these men expected to perform the most hazardous of duties.

A line company was composed of two platoons of thirty-one men each, under the leadership of an officer, a company commander, a first sergeant, a company

clerk, and a company mail clerk. Each platoon consisted of a platoon leader, a platoon runner, a platoon sergeant, a sniper, two assault sections of eleven men each and a mortar section of six men. In the assault section was one assault squad of four riflemen and a squad leader and an automatic weapons squad of four men and a squad leader. The eleventh man in the assault section was the section leader. The mortar section had a section leader, a squad leader, gunner, assistant gunner and two ammo bearers.

On July 2, 1943, Major James E. Rudder took over command of the Second Ranger Infantry Battalion and immediately he began whipping it into shape to function in a manner he thought the Battalion should function in order to overcome any obstacle they might and would meet in combat. After spending the hot summer months in Tennessee, faithfully training and grinding away, after a series of injections of new blood and purges, the men received the pack up orders they had long been waiting to hear.

On September 4, 1943, the Battalion left Camp Forrest, Tennessee for a train ride and our new station, Fort Pierce, Florida. Arriving in Fort Pierce on September 5, 1943 at 1000 hours, the entire Battalion had their pyramidal tents pitched, were dressed in jungle boots and fatigues, had eaten chow and were ready to start training in full swing by 1300 hours. After eleven days of a little sleep and strenuous amphibious training, the Battalion once again entrained, this time for Fort Dix, New Jersey on September 16, 1943. Arriving in Fort Dix on September 18, 1943 we began a seven day a week training schedule so as to be able to squeeze in a furlough for the boys before we left for overseas duty and the war.

The mere mention of Fort Dix will bring back many happy memories to the men in this Battalion. There was Baloney John's in Wrightstown, where Larry Lane wrote a song for this Battalion known as the "Ranger Song" and sung to the tune of the "Grand Old Flag." In Trenton there was the "Pirate Ship," "Herby-Derby," "Bar and Grill," "The Oasis," "326 Club," and "Murphy's." Trenton, which so generously welcomed the Battalion with open arms, was also the scene of the Battalion dance. Trenton will never be forgotten if but one building remains standing when we get back. That is the old "Hitching Post," where the men of the Battalion stopped in the wee hours of the morning for as much coffee and as many doughnuts as they could stand. Right across the street, conveniently enough, was the bus station whose busses serviced Fort Dix. New York City, Baltimore, Newark, and Philadelphia were all easily accessible from Fort Dix. Many an odd haircut was given at Fort Dix. Especially outstanding was the one Staff Sergeant Richard G. Garrett of Jackhorn, Kentucky pasted on Private Robert Clark's dome. It was in Fort Dix that the members of the Battalion were finally issued the long awaited

and much coveted Ranger patch. Five diamonds per man to be protected with your life if need be.

On September 21, 1943, the Battalion entrucked for a two hundred fifty mile ride to Camp Ritchie, Maryland, for a two-day problem. During the run of this problem, C Company, on an inky black night, scaled a cliff which seemed to rise at a ninety-degree angle and felt as though it rose to a height of 10 miles. We finally reached our objective on the top of the peak without any casualties or events other than a lot of huffing and puffing. It was in Camp Ritchie too, where the Battalion got acquainted with the looks and sound of firing of different enemy weapons, German, Italian, and Japanese.

Back in Fort Dix once again from Maryland, Charlie Company went on a five-day problem which was run by each platoon. We traveled only at night, sleeping in the woods during the day, and captured and cooked our own meals. Patrols of sabotage and reconnaissance patrols were also sent out. Back from the five-day problem, C Company left immediately on October 6, 1943 for five day furloughs. Previous to this, the Second Platoon of C Company, under the able leadership of Lt. Sidney Saioman of Newark, New Jersey, ran a problem under the watchful eyes of Major Rudder. Firing all weapons to the Nth degree of accuracy and aggressive all the way through the problem, the Second Platoon performed like seasoned combat troops. As a reward for their excellent showing, Major Rudder gave the Second Platoon an extra day furlough time. All good things seem to come to an end all too soon and so it was with Fort Dix and a second paradise. Many a man and maid parted at Fort Dix with a sad and aching heart. On November 11, 1943, the Battalion entrained en route to 2414, or in other words, the P.O.E., Camp Shanks, New York.

Camp Shanks was the scene of many heated arguments between the Rangers and other troops ready for overseas shipment. Remember when the lad from B Company (on KP at the time) gently nudged the SOS mess Sergeant on the chin and the Sergeant flew out the window? And the time when Pfc. Mike Gargas of Newark, New Jersey and Pfc. Von Beekler tangled outside the Mess Hall steps? Some SOS Corporal was about to stop the fight when T/5 Steve Stepancevich of Hammond, Indiana and a dozen other Rangers threaten to throw the Corporal out of the Camp limits. For, as all the Rangers agreed and put it, "It's the best fight we have seen the Rangers perform in, since we left Trenton." Out of this fight came a lasting friendship known as "Bleek and Gleek, Inc." which was parted only by death on D-day, on the bloody Omaha Beach.

On November 21, 1943, the Second Ranger Battalion bid adieu to Camp Shanks and entrained to NY 594. One rumor had come true. Rumors spread through the Battalion that we were to climb aboard the Queen Elizabeth, a beautiful ship. board ship the Rangers assumed the duties of MPs and were allowed

the privilege of having the run of the boat, a privilege denied to the other troops who had to remain in their own respective areas. Thanksgiving, a day sacred to the American people, was spent on the boat en route overseas with just memories of fried chicken and turkey, of cranberry sauce with all the trimmings. On board ship we saw a USO show and all agreed that it was very good.

After an uneventful dash across the Atlantic aboard this lady greyhound of the seas, we steamed slowly into the Firth of Clyde. On December 1, 1943, the Battalion disembarked at Grennoch, Scotland. Just before we boarded the train for our new station, we had the privilege to buy our first alien beer. The Scotchman who sold the beer to us accepted our dollar bills, mumbled something about “tuppence — aypermy, thrupny-bit” and then gave us a British coin or two. Generally though, there wasn’t any change coming back. We boarded what seemed to us a toy train, for the English trains are very much smaller than ours back home, and we were en route to our new station.

On December 2, 1943, we arrived in Bude, North Cornwall in southern England and soon we were billeted with English families in their homes. The 190th Field Artillery was also located in Bude and soon discrepancies arose between the Rangers and the 190th. All in all though, the two outfits got along very well. The Rangers soon adapted themselves to the English people, environment, and customs. In Bude came another purge, as in Fort Dix, and old men left the Company and new men were received as replacements. Cliff scaling, hikes, and night problems going across country over hedgerows, seemed to make up the majority of our schedule. The free evenings were spent in the Globe, the “flickers” or theatre, or in the Carrier’s Inn. The Green Tub, with Joy with those huge brown eyes serving tea, was also another popular spot. Some of the mischievous rowdy-dows sneaked off to Stratton, a town about twenty minutes’ walk from Bude and “Off Limits” to us white troops because American negro troops were stationed nearby.

A Christmas party was given by the Rangers to the English children of Bude and other nearby towns. We saved our candy, gum, and cookies rations for over a month and the party was a huge success with about seven hundred children attending. It did everyone’s heart good to watch the children eat candy and pineapples and such other goodies that were denied to them because of the War. When you see a big husky American lad driving a three quarter ton truck laden with children, and while he is driving with one arm, in the other he holds a cute blond English girl of three, it is then that tears form in your eyes and a lump seems to swell up in your throat. England was good to us, especially Bude. Many friends were made there between the Rangers and the English people. The people did their utmost to put us wise to the ways and customs of, England. On January 16, 1944, the Battalion left Bude using

the Buddy System mode for transportation. Each Company went to a different town, with different assignments.

Charlie Company when the Ranger Battalion was first formed, was made up of men from the 38th Infantry Division and C Company’s first C.O. was 1st Lt. F. M. Phillips. On June 10, 1943, 1st Lt., now Captain, Ralph E. Goranson of Chicago, Illinois, assumed command of Charlie Company and carried it from Camp Forrest, Tennessee to the ETO, through combat and V-E day, and up to the present day is still in command.

On this move, from Bude to our new station, Sandown, Isle of Wight, each man was shown on the map where Sandown was located. Then he was given fifteen English pounds or equivalent to 60.00 dollars. This money was paid to him by the US Government as ration money to be used by him, to pay his English landlords on the Isle of Wight for room and board. The government paid the enlisted men at the rate of one pound or four dollars a day and he in turn had to bargain with the landlord as to the amount of money that should be paid for room and board. The trip from Bude to Sandown, a distance of 200 miles, was made by the Company in groups of two men each, traveling the best way available, i.e. by train, bus, or hitch hiking.

We had four days to accomplish this trip and the majority of the boys spent three days at Portsmouth, Southampton, Exeter, London, or other nearby cities. To get to the Isle of Wight, one had to catch a ferry boat from the mainland in either Southampton or Portsmouth, and the trip usually took about a half-hour to forty-five minutes.

If we thought that the people of Bude treated us well, it was only because we hadn’t met the people of Sandown yet. Charlie Company, along with Easy Company, were the only two companies stationed in Sandown. We Rangers were the first American troops to be stationed on the Isle of Wight. Easy Company was on one end of the town and Charlie Company on the other end. So that no controversy would arise between the two companies this plan was agreed upon: *“You guys from Easy Company stay on your side of town and leave our beer, scotch, and women alone and we will do the same by not going through your end of town.”* This plan worked splendidly. The British civilians and British Army, Navy, and RAF personnel went all out for us when they found out we were Rangers. The reason for this: the costly raid on Dieppe by British and Canadian Commandoes was launched from the Isle of Wight and many of the civilians had had these Commandoes billeted in their homes. Some of our Battalion trained with the British Commandoes and several cross channel raids were on the schedule. These raids failed to materialize due to the roughness of the water in the Channel, although some of our men did go with British and French Commandoes on several cross channel excursions.

The Isle of Wight, during peacetime, is a summer resort, one of the best in the world, and consequently the English people on the Isle were well qualified to treat people from all parts of the world as guests. With us they went a step further and took us into their homes as sons. Many men woke up in the morning to find some member of the household standing beside his bed holding a breakfast tray that contained a fresh egg, tea, and crumpets. The training schedule wasn't too strenuous but we did have some new experiences. It was on the Isle of Wight that Charlie Company and the Battalion first got acquainted with scaling chalky cliffs. Once a week we took a morning dip in the channel. We most certainly cannot forget that long run each morning on the beach when you sank ankle deep in the sand. The beach was very beautiful with pavilions jutting out into the water, but its beauty was marred by the war time appearance of barbed wire, underwater obstacles, pill boxes, and gun emplacements. Numerous night problems of infiltration, reconnaissance patrols, defensive positions, and compass marches were included in the schedule. During the free evenings the boys patronized the two movie houses or the Stag, the Fort Tavern, the Standard, the Tap, or the Manor House—all pubs, with the exception of the Manor House which was a private club. One became a club member of the Manor House simply by giving the secretary of the club your two and six or a half dollar in American money and you received your membership card. This card entitled you to buy drinks at the bar and entry to the dance floor and the card had to be renewed every six months. The Standard was the scene of many hot dart games between the Rangers, British civilians, and the members of the British Army. On February 16, 1944, we left Sandown for a new station. Sandown was one of the best deals that Charlie Company ever had and to this day there are many boys who are still corresponding with the British friends made there on the Isle of Wight.

These four questions about the Isle of Wight were asked of the following four men and here are the answers:

- What did you think of the housing plan in general and can you think of anything to improve any mistakes you may have noticed?
- Would you like to come under that plan again if you had the chance?
- Did the meals that the British cooked for themselves and you, appease your appetites?
- What did you think of the training program and what improvement can be made, if any?

Pfc. John Yadlosky of Monesson, Pa:

"The housing of American troops with British families was tops with me. Couldn't be beat. I certainly would jump at the chance to come under that plan again. The food did not satisfy my appetite. The things I noticed were lacking, were vegetables and meat. The training was just enough to keep you trim and in shape."

S/Sgt. Joseph Wetzel of Kewanee, Ill.:

"The three boys whom I lived with and I got along very well with our British family and I liked the plan. I did hear of several boys having minor difficulties but they were soon ironed out to everyone's satisfaction. Hell yes, I like to come under that plan again if under the same circumstances! We ate very good. Of course, we paid the landlady some on the side, but she was using the money to buy food from black market sources so we were all pleased. The training was all right for the job we were supposed to do. The Lymington night reconnaissance raid could have been greatly improved in a hundred different ways."

Sergeant Elmer 'Doc' Watkins, Delphi, Indiana:

"The plan was very good in that it was just like home. Eat breakfast, dinner, and supper right with the people. They did your laundry, and well, it was just as I said, Home. I would like to get another break like that. The meals were good at times and others weren't so hot. I missed my coffee, pancakes, fried eggs, and other American foods. As a whole, the food was good. The training was the only program which I thought really fitted in with our type of unit, i. e. cliff climbing, beach landings, etc."

Staff Sergeant Oliver E. Reed, Fort Wayne, Indiana:

"It was just like home and at times the only connection that I felt I had with the Army was that I had GI clothes on. I believe the Army should be run that way and it is the often mentioned 'once in a lifetime'. If I had that chance again I'd be right at the head of the column. The one objection I had to the food was the Brussel sprouts. I've never liked them and I never will. I realize that there is a vast difference between the American and British diet, but once I got accustomed to the English diet I had no kicks coming. The training was hard but short, which allowed enough time to relax and get rid of all the tension in your body. I wouldn't make any changes in the schedule if it were up to me."

February 16, 1944, we arrived in Bude, North Cornwall and once again occupied the same billets that we had previous to our departure for the Isle of Wight. Training was carried on the same manner as had been conducted before we left for the Isle of Wight.

March 11, 1944 Charlie Company went on a five day furlough. On April 1, 1944, the enlisted men of the Battalion put on a skit pantomiming the events that had happened during our past year of activation. That night a dance was given for the members of the Battalion and their friends. On April 3, 1944, the Battalion moved from Bude to Braunton, North Devonshire, to the assault training center school. After a little more than three weeks of rugged training, some of which involved the Fifth Ranger Battalion, the Battalion moved to Dorchester, Dorset.

While in Dorchester, the Battalion took part in a problem known as 'Fabius 1', for the dress rehearsal to the Invasion. There, Charlie Company men found out and realized for the first time the importance of the role that they were to play in the big show. May 7, 1944, the Battalion moved to Swanage, Dorset, and Charlie Company was billeted in two large buildings right next to the W.A.A.F. quarters. It was in Swanage where the Light Machine Gun was replaced by the BAR as the primary automatic weapon in a Ranger line company. In May, the Battalion moved once again to Dorchester and the D-5 area. We were briefed on the big show known as 'Neptune' and each man knew exactly where he was going to be on every minute of D-Day. It was here also that the short haircuts got to be popular and the night before we went aboard ship, the Jerries came over and laid some eggs on the ships in the harbor of Weymouth. In the D-5 area, Charlie Company lost a damn good man, S/Sgt. Vito Latronica of Pittsburg, Pa. He went to the States to get married and we were all sorry in a way and happy in another way to see him go.

On June 1, 1944, we entrucked for Weymouth and got aboard the ships in Portland Harbor. There were many hips in the harbor and they were all laden down with war materials. It was hard to realize that at last we were to see action. Able, Baker, and Charlie Companies went aboard a former channel steamer, the Prince Charles. This boat had carried Rangers on every mission that called for a boat. The trip previous to this the Prince Charles had helped to bring the Rangers of the 1st, 3rd, and 4th Ranger Battalions into the Anzio beachhead in Italy.





CHAPTER II:

D-DAY

The mission of the Second Ranger Battalion was to destroy a battery of 155mm guns which were located on Pointe du Hoc, France. These guns threatened the debarkation area and interdicted both Omaha and Utah beaches. Various plans for the destruction of the guns were studied and it was finally agreed to adopt the following one: Companies D, E, and F were to land on Pointe du Hoc, scale the cliffs, destroy the guns and occupy the enemy gun positions thereon. Company C was to land on the beach at Vierville sur Mer, move to the enemy positions thereon. Companies A and B were to land according to one of the following two plans: One: If the proper signal was received they would land at Pointe du Hoc and reinforce Companies D, E, and F. Two: If no signal was received, they would land at Vierville sur Mer and move as rapidly as possible to the aid of the three companies on Pointe du Hoc.

C Company's mission was as follow: Land on H hour with other elements of a combat team from the 116th Infantry Regiment, 29th Infantry Division, on Omaha Dog Green Beach. C Company was to secure the right flank of the beach. We were to follow A Company of the 116th through the town of Vierville sur Mer, if A Company could capture the town without meeting too much resistance, If the resistance was too strong, then C Company was to scale the cliffs on the beach and proceed from there. Charlie Company was to knock out enemy gun positions on Point El-Raz-De-las-Perce which was 2,000 yards west of the landing point and to help in earring out this mission, ten tanks were to fire from the beach on the targets while C Company moved in. The Navy also had destroyers firing on Point-El-Raz-De-la-Perce for 45 minutes before C Company moved into the attack and after that the Naval fire was on call at all times when necessary.

The next objective was a Radar station two miles west of the landing point and too much resistance was not expected from here because our bombers were to soften it up for us. A main road ran parallel with the ocean to the town of Grandcamp-LeeBains. The area between the road and the ocean, a distance of about three quarters of a mile in width and approximately five miles long from Vierville sur Mer to Pointe du Hoc, was studded with about twenty pill boxes, bunkers, and numerous open gun emplacements and Charlie Company had to clear these points up so that the supplies could move down the road without any hindrance. The whole mission of Charlie Company was to be accomplished in two hours. The passwords of D-Day until D plus 10 were Welcome-Thunder, Weapon-Throat, and Thirsty-Victory.

On the day before D-Day, June 5, 1944, Lt. Col. Rudder called the men of A, B, and C companies and he briefly reviewed the big show for us again. To the Charlie Company members he said: *"Boys, you are going on the beach as the first Rangers in this Battalion to set foot on a French beach. But don't worry about being alone. When D, E, F take care of*

Pointe du Hoc, we will come down, and give you a hand with your objectives. Good luck and may God be with you."

At 0400 hours, while Able and Baker Company men still slept on the Prince Charles, the "Hands to Operation Stations" call sounded for Charlie Company men. The two landing craft assault boats, numbers 418 which carried in the 1st Platoon, and the 1038 which carried in the 2d Platoon were loaded up. At 0430 hours the two boats were lowered away. The two boats moved through the rough seas to the area of the Empire Javelin and joined the boats of A Company, 116th Infantry Regiment and started the ten mile trip into shore. We were really packed in the LCA's and soon some of the boys became sea sick. Many times during that ride into shore it looked as though our boats would be swamped. Nearing shore, the boys in the Second Platoon boat all stood up to watch our naval vessels firing at inland targets. Over to our right we could hear the bombs from our bombers, crumping as they poured down on Pointe du Hoc and caused the sky to turn a brilliant reddish orange hue. About 500 yards to the full sight to watch wave after wave of our rockets, at the enemy installations on shore. It was a beautiful sight to watch wave after wave of our rockets, two hundred and forty in each wave, arch gracefully through the sky. Unfortunately, the rockets were mostly all wasted because the majority of them landed in the water, far from their intended inland targets. Two hundred yards to go and no enemy opposition, looked like a pushover. Suddenly, in boat No. 1038, 1st Sgt. Golas of Pawtucket, R. I. exclaimed, "Gee fellows, they are shooting back at us!" Meanwhile, in boat No. 418, the boys were singing to Sgt. Walter Geldon of Bethlehem, Penn. because June 6, 1944 was Walt's third wedding anniversary.

Ramps down and we plunged into the water, in some places over our heads. The Germans started to pour it on us. Machine guns, snipers, and mortars, with just a few rounds of artillery at first. The 2nd Platoon boat was raked by enemy machine gun fire and many of the boys slumped over in the water, dead. Almost immediately after the first men of the 1st Platoon left their boat the ramp of the boat was blown off by a direct hit from an enemy mortar shell. In a space of another 60 seconds the boat again was hit by mortar fire, this time amidships and in the stern on the starboard side. Soon the boat started to flounder and break up as she continued to receive fire. Plan 1 for Charlie Company was definitely out, for A Company of the 116th was practically wiped out on the beach, let alone reaching their objective—Vierville sur Mer.

Now the men left in Charlie Company made for the protective cover of the cliff. Atop the cliff was a fortified house just bulging with Germans and soon these same Jerries began to lob grenades upon us below the cliff. Mike Garges looked up the cliff and when he saw a German potato masher type grenade

hurtling down upon us, he would shout out this warning, "*Watch out fellows, here comes another mash potato!*"

Lt. William Moody, Sgt. Julius Belcher of Swords Creek, Va., and Pfc. Otto Stephens of Newcastle, Ind. scaled the cliff and assisted the remainder of the Company up to the top of the cliff. Then, while the majority of C Company set up a defensive position on the cliff, other men of the Company moved out into the attack on the fortified house. Lt. Moody killed the officer in charge of the men in the fortified house and the immediate area which was honey-combed with dugouts and trench systems. Lt. Moody had S/Sgt. Garrett, Pfc. Brownie Bolin of California, Mo., Pfc. Stanley Moak, of Detroit, Michigan, Pfc. Thorpe T. Cooper of Blackfoot, Idaho, Pfc. Stephens, and Sgt. Charles Flanagan of Mississippi along the patrol that began to mop up the fortified house. Lt. Moody was killed instantly when a sniper fired at the patrol as they made their way towards the house. LL Saloman immediately went out and took charge of the patrol. Meanwhile, on the other side of the house T/Sgt. George Morrow of South Bend, Indiana and Sgt. Belcher spotted a machine gun nest, housed in a pill box, which was spraying the beach unmercifully with lead. This nest was one of the guns that caused C Company a lot of casualties on the Beach. Sgt. Belcher kicked the door of the pill box open and threw in a white phosphorus grenade. As soon as the phosphorus began to burn on the Jerry skins, they abandoned their gun and ran out the door, screaming to the high heavens and Hitler to help them out. Later Sgt. Belcher put it, "*Just like shooting ducks in a shooting gallery.*"

When the total German dead were counted in the fortified house and in the surrounding trenches and gun emplacements, the score board read 68 enlisted men and one officer, kaput. One wounded prisoner was taken. On the defensive side of the story, here is something of interest. A small American vessel steamed slowly by our position about 500 yards off shore when without warning of any kind it opened up on us with 20mm Pom-Pom guns. About 20 rounds were fired and luckily enough we suffered no casualties. Later on, we found out that their gunners were actually firing on enemy snipers, instead upon us. About an hour later, an American destroyer opened up on us with 5-inch guns at about a range of 500 yards. The shelling was short, but two C Company men were hit in the brief time. S/Sgt. Elijah Dycus of Detroit, Michigan was wounded slightly in the head. T/Sgt. William Lindsay of Floral Park, New York was in concrete pill box that received two direct hits. As a result Sgt. Lindsay lost a tooth and was knocked silly by the concussion. Three times during the day Sgt. Lindsay almost walked off the cliff and that night, he accused a full Colonel of the 29th Division of stealing his rifle and all the while Sgt. Lindsay had his rifle slung over his shoulder. Reconnaissance

showed that Naval fire had destroyed Point El-Ras-De-la-Perce and a hon's share of the credit must go to the British destroyer, HMS Glasgow. Charlie Company had no communications with the rest of the Battalion, for all radios and their operators had been lost.

Companies A and B having failed to receive the signal to land at Pointe du Hoc "touched down" on the Beach at Vierville sur Mer at H plus one hour. Directly under withering enemy rifle, machine gun, artillery, and rocket fire they suffered heavy casualties, but continued their advance across the beach and moved inland. Late on D-Day night, Charlie Company joined A and B companies about a mile beyond Vierville sur Mer. Making a check of the company and reorganizing once again at the same time, here are the casualties that were suffered by C Company on D-Day:

KILLED IN ACTION

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • 1st Lt. William D. Moody | • Pfc. Sammie Adkins |
| • 1st Sgt. Henry S. Golas | • Pfc. Volney E. Beekler |
| • S/Sgt. James A. Kane | • Pfc. James E. Donahue |
| • Sgt. Walter B. Geldon | • Pfc. Wayne E. Goad |
| • Sgt. Kenneth A. Hendrickson | • Pfc. David L. Gourley |
| • Sgt. Robert J. Raymond | • Pfc. Leslie M. Irvin |
| • T/5 Willis C. Caperton | • Pfc. William D. Myers |
| • T/5 William W. Lynch Jr. | • Pfc. Fred w. Plumblee |
| • T/5 Vayle Miller | • Pc. Eddie W. Harding |
| • T/5 Marvin A. Simko | • T/5 James A. Machan (Radio |
| • Pfc. Harold D. Clendenin | Operator from HQs. Comp., att.) |

WOUNDED IN ACTION

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| • 1st Lt. Sidney A. Saloman | • Pfc. Deimos O. Duncan |
| • T/Sgt. William Lindsay | • Pfc. Jack W. Hastings |
| • S/Sgt. Elijah D. Dycus Jr. | • Pfc. Morris D. Poynter |
| • S/Sgt. Oliver E. Reed | • Pfc. Winfred P. Smith |
| • S/Sgt. Harry A. Wilder | • Pfc. Elmer P. Watkins |
| • S/Sgt. Richard G. Garrett | • Pfc. Clarence A. Wilson |
| • T/5 Matthew J. Wyder | • Pfc. John Yadlosky |
| • T/5 Jesse J. Runyan | • Pfc. Brownie L. Bolin |
| • T/5 Steve Stepanchevich | • Pfc. Otto K Stephens |

Up bright and early and as we moved out as part of the point to go to Pointe du Hoc with 10 medium tanks, snipers opened fire, also German machine guns. These we found out later from prisoners were new troops rushed up at night. So under their fire, as unconcerned as if it were a hail storm we moved out. Everything went along fine and we only got a couple of Germans until we hit St. Pierre du Mont. Here the point, Company A, ran into a number of machine gun nests. The tanks were brought up and as they hit the area, they were brought under artillery fire. It was here that S/Sgt. Joseph Wetzel and S/Sgt. Paul Byzon were wounded. Held up here, C Company of the 116th Infantry plus C and D Companies of the 5th Ranger Battalion moved through and cleared the area to the Point. Sporadic artillery fire continued to fall in this area through the day. We dug in here for the night. D plus two, the next morning, we moved at about 0800 hours and joined the rest of the Battalion on Pointe du Hoc.

The German PWs taken during this day period complained of the unorthodox method of warfare as practiced by the Rangers. All German defenses were primarily faced to the fields in the direction of the Channel. These PWs stated *"instead of attacking through the fields as any soldier will tell you is the right thing to do, the crazy Americans came down the road instead."* Checking on the Battalion as a whole, after we were all united on Pointe du Hoc, it was discovered that 77 Rangers were killed, 152 wounded, and 38 missing during the engagement. The assigned mission was accomplished. We had destroyed the coastal battery at Pointe du Hoc and established an initial beachhead on two sections of Omaha Beach.

Asked at random what they thought about the whole business from the minute of the landing to the time they contacted D, E, and F Companies at Pointe du Hoc, here are the personal opinions of four Charlie Company men:

Capt. Goranson:

"Going across the Beach was just like a dream with all the movement of the body and mind just automatic motion. With so little of the Company left, I gave Lt. Moody the word to proceed with Plan Two and just hoped for the best. I was worried until three o'clock in the afternoon of D-Day because we had no radio or physical communications with any other unit and I thought we were to be stranded, alone, for quite some time. D-Day night when we moved out to help elements of the 29th Division to set up a defensive position, we met Lt. Heaney, our S-3, and I was greatly relieved to find out where A and B Companies were. On D plus one, I felt good when I heard American BAR and machine gun fire on our left flank and our rear. I knew the 175th Infantry Regiment was securing our exposed flank and mopping up snipers in our rear.

When we contacted Pointe du Hoc I knew it was in the bag for the time being. If I ever have to make another Beach landing on enemy territory, I will really sweat for I know what to expect now."

1st Lt. Saloman (now CO of Baker Company):

"Coming in on the LCA, I stood in the bow of the boat practically all the way in. When the coastline came into view I tried to pick out familiar landmarks that I had memorized on maps and aerial photographs and in that way orient myself. Up until about 500 yards from shore, when we began to receive enemy fire, I seriously believed that the Jerries had abandoned their coastal defenses and had pulled back farther inland to make their stand. At a signal from the British naval officer, in charge of the boat, I walked off the ramp and was carried under water by the weight of my equipment. I got up and helped a man to his feet, whom I saw go under water. On the beach I began to worry about my men, because they started to bear away from the spot under the cliff that was the designated place for us to scale the cliff. Once atop the cliff, I felt very bad when I found out the number of casualties we had suffered. Then too, I realized that something had to be done fast in order to keep the men alive that were left. My personal opinion is, that our company could have accomplished their mission, word for word and to the minute, if we had proceeded according to plans, but we would have had a far greater casualty rate than we did have. Up until noon D-Day, I thought the invasion was a failure and I wondered if we could make a successful withdrawal and try the invasion some time again in the near future. As it was, we accomplished our mission with just a little more time taken up. D-Day night, I was too tired to worry and slept good. The second day and the third day proceeded just like another problem. I give credit to Captain Arnold for the work he did in reorganizing and taking charge of A, B, and C Companies. He had no communications and no information with and about friendly adjacent units. When we reached Pointe du Hoc, I realized that C Company had fared the worst by far, of any other Company in the Battalion and my biggest regret was the fact that I lost so many personal friends and my best buddy, Lt. Moody. Hell Yes, I will take another boat ride, preferably to the coast of Japan!"

Staff Sergeant Charles Semchuck of Hammond, Indiana:

"I was worried as all hell on top of the cliff, just waiting for the Jerries to push us back into Channel. They had the chance to do it then. D-Day night when we made contact with our A and B Companies my spirits and morale rose a hundred percent. When we contacted D, E, and F Companies, I felt like doing handsprings for I was so happy. I knew then that the Jerries had muffed their one chance for victory. I never again want to be in another D-Day."

S/Sgt. Marvin Lutz of Hickory, NC.:

"Going across the beach was like a horrible nightmare, so many of my buddies were killed or wounded. All our supporting units, that is, tanks which were knocked out and the Field Artillery which did not land, failed to give the needed support. One never realizes how helpless he is with just a rifle to combat enemy mortar, machine gun, and artillery fire, until he comes face to face with a situation such as we faced. The second day, when we were stopped temporarily by artillery fire, I heard the rumor that we were cut from the beach in the rear. I hoped and prayed that help in the form of the 45,000 Infantry troops who were supposed to land on our beach D-Day, but didn't, would come and give us a helping hand. I felt better when our half-tracks brought us ammo and C rations from the Beach. I really felt good when we made contact with Point de Hoe and brother, I say this, no more D-Days for me if I can help it!"

A few words about the Medics: Rangers, Division, or Naval Medics. On the Beach, the Germans ignored the Red Cross and shot to kill anything that moved. T/5 Randolph Rinker, the medic attached to Charlie Company, worked like a slave to patch up the wounded men of C Company and the 29th Division. After we contacted A and B Companies, whose medics had been wounded and left behind on the beach Rinker added these two companies to his practice. He did a magnificent job until the other companies were able to get medics of their own. On Pointe du Hoc the medics of D, E, and F Companies, when there wasn't any wounded men to take care of, handled Lewis Machine guns like veteran line company soldiers.



CHAPTER III:

NORTHERN FRANCE

About 1600 hours in the afternoon of D plus two, the Battalion moved toward Grand Camp and spent the night this side, east, of the sluiceways. Enemy planes bombed close by that night. The next day we moved to Osmondville and dug in and prepared to stay for a few days. The next day, June 10th, a patrol from the first platoon and patrol from the second platoon, about 20 men in all, cleared an area back to the village of Maisy. One prisoner was taken, a Pole, who was very happy that he had been captured. The first platoon ran into a wounded, half crazed cow who proceeded to attack them. S/Sgt. Maynard Priesman of

Oak Harbor, Ohio and S/Sgt. Charlie Gross of Rhode Island, the former with a Tommy Gun and the latter with an M-1 rifle, co-operated and put the cow out of her misery. Here also the boys caught some Jerry cavalry horses and then the Rangers were the first "horse cavalry" unit of the United States Army on French soil. The patrols had beaucoup bottles of liquid refreshments on their person when they arrived back at the bivouac area.

June 11th at 2000 hours we left this area for a new one and arrived at 0400 June 12th in a woods known as Bois du Molay. Heavy flak here each night

made it necessary to make dugouts by reinforcing our fox holes with heavy logs. June 15th new replacements began to arrive into the Battalion. June 16th we moved to Columbia Aires, France and on June 17th Charlie Company received 23 Enlisted Men and two officers, Lt. Robert Page, and Lt. Edward S. Kucinski of North Carolina, Lt. Saloman was transferred to Baker Company as CO. Training of the new men began and night work was stressed. On June 25th we moved to Valognes and got the job of collecting and guarding PWs. The record of putting 83 PWs in one six by six truck is one incident that happened in Valognes that will not be forgotten by Charlie Company men.

July 3, 1944, the Battalion moved to Beaumont Hague, twenty miles from Cherbourg, and began to train once again. This time we had buildings to live in. Here once again we received more new men and some of our old men, wounded on D-Day, began to trickle back into the Company. Although it was in June that individuals were awarded decorations in Columbia-Aires by Lt. Gen. Hodges for their outstanding heroism on D-Day, it was here in Beaumont Hague that the Battalion was rewarded collectively for their part in the invasion on D-Day we were awarded the Presidential Citation. On July 22, 1944, Lt. Page, while instructing a class, was instantly killed by a German bazooka round which went off in his hands. Pfc. Walter Kacala, Pfc. George Bock, S/Sgt. Marvin O. Lutz, Pvt. Constantinides, Pvt. Martin Buckeley, and Pvt. Robert Goldsmith were all wounded by the fragments and were all hospitalized. To replace Lt. Page, 2nd Lt. Adrian L. Kahle (Bossman as he is affectionately called by his men) of St. Louis, Mo. took over the 2nd Platoon. On August 6th, we left Beaumont Hague for Canisy, France. After four days in Canisy we left for Buais, France. When we arrived there we set up a defensive position for the night.





CHAPTER IV: BRITTANY

The Battalion entrucked from Mayenne for a 150 mile ride to the Brittany Peninsula and on August 19, 1944 arrived in Le Folgoet, France. The people cheered all the way en route and threw anything from bottles of Calvados to bushels of apples at us as we went by. All the French could say was “*Vive l’Amerique!*” Here also was the first time that we saw that much talked about FFI, or the French Forces of the Interior. We pitched tents in the fields of Le Folgoet and awaited developments. We had grandstand seats in watching our bombers give Brest, and the Jerries, hell. On August 26th, the 1st and 2nd Platoon mortar sections of eleven enlisted men in all, under the leadership of Lt. Kucinski, were attached to the FFI. Under his excellent guidance and observation they killed 11 Jerries and routed many more in one barrage. August 27th, we departed from Le Folgoet and arrived in Ploumoguer to help kick Jerry out of Brest, a port which the Allies needed badly. We were attached to the VIII Corp of the Ninth Army. On August 28th, Companies A and C attacked an enemy position in the vicinity of Trezien capturing 94 prisoners and killing nine without loss to themselves. On the following day A and C continued to drive towards the southwest in coordination with the FFI, taking an enemy position in Kerrichan, capturing 72 prisoners and killing eight.

August 31, A and C Companies advanced on an enemy Fort at Kergolieau and were subjected to heavy mortar and machine gunfire. We held our lines and Charlie Company had one hedgerow and 400 yards of open ground, that was heavily mined, between them and the enemy positions. The Company had successfully reached this hedgerow without being detected by the enemy. The enemy was plastered with 105mm Artillery fire but showed no signs of cracking.

On September 2nd, the 1st Platoon of Charlie Company and Able Company left for Kermence, to assist the rest of the Battalion where they encountered strong enemy resistance. The following day, the remainder of the 2nd Platoon with the exception of Lt. Kahle and six enlisted men, who remained to contain the enemy in his position, left to join the First Platoon

and the rest of the Battalion. On that day, Charlie Company captured Tre-meal and killed five and captured six of the enemy. On September 7th, Charlie Company advanced to Berbougus overcoming all resistance that was met. It was here that when Charlie Company set up a defense for the night, Pfc. Walter Lukovsky, a new man, was found missing. The next morning he was found dead, but in front of Mm were six dead Heinies whom he shot, before they got him.

The next day, the Company advanced to Tretlis and captured 51 enemy and killed three. Finally, on the 9th of September, a coordinated attack by the Second Ranger Battalion and adjacent units was launched against the Locrist Battery and supporting installations. The guns in this battery were called the “Chattanooga Choo-Choos” by the boys and those big shells really made a man sweat. One shell could take a modern eight room house, with garage, and park it over in the next county. At 1100 hours the battery surrendered. Upon examining the battery closely, it was discovered that a man could put his head into the muzzle of any one gun with his helmet on, and still have room to spare.

The following day, Companies A and C joined Lt. Kahle and his meh at Kerolieau in a coordinated attack on the enemy Fort. It capitulated without a shot being fired and the campaign for the destruction of the enemy position on Le Conquet peninsula was over. The boys from all Companies had beaucoup bottles, swastika flags, Jerry uniforms, and all different types of pistols taken away from the enemy during this campaign. The following men of Carlie Company were wounded in the Le Conquet peninsula:

- 1st Lt. Eddie Kucinski (twice)
- S/Sgt. Charles Gross
- S/Sgt. Marvin Kirk
- S/Sgt. Joe Wetzel (twice)
- S/Sgt. Charles Flanagan
- Pfc. George Disko
- Pfc. Stanley Moak
- Pfc. Frank Celis
- Pfc. Leon Fisk
- Pfc. Floyd Crego
- Pfc. James Curiey
- Pfc. Robert Innella
- Pfc. Boyd C. Max

On the 18th of September the Battalion was sent to the Crozon peninsula. It assisted in the capture of Le Fret by taking a gun position located there and capturing 78 PWs. The battalions advance in this sector also helped to effect the release of 400 American PWs, killed over 250 enemy and caused unknown numbers of casualties.

The Battalion traveled from Kervourn, to Landerneau to Argol to Le Fret to Prat Mer to Kirbilben and back to Landerneau in rapid succession before we had any idea as to what was to happen next. On September 28, 1944 at Landerneau, France, the Battalion entrained for Belgium. We had heard and read a lot about the 40 and 8 French box cars, but never had the experience to ride in them until now the government was good to us in that they didn't put any horses in with us. Just 36 men with equipment, complete, to a car. We all know now how sardines feel. Too bad the train didn't stop for a short five-day layover in Paris!





CHAPTER V: ARDENNES

After a most miserable train ride we arrived in Longwy, France, where we detrained and climbed aboard trucks, which hauled us to Arlon, Belgium, our new station. In Arlon, the Battalion lived under canvas and a training schedule was carried out. In the city of Arlon, the boys could spend their free evenings going to the movies or drinking beer or dancing — which ever suited the individuals' mood. The area was damp almost continuously because it rained nearly every day or night. On October 20, 1944, the Battalion traveled, via truck, to Esch, Luxemburg. A, B, and C Companies moved about a mile from the outskirts of town to barracks. D, E, and F Companies remained in buildings in the town proper. A training schedule was also in force here. In Esch, the boys met the first people whom they considered just like home folks, on the European continent proper. Passes were issued in the evenings and one could go to town with a 50 franc note and come back to camp with change in his pocket. The people were very reasonable with their prices. Many boys were invited to the homes of the Luxemburgers and had served to them a delicious home cooked meat that resembled American food more than any food he had eaten since he had left the states. On November 3, 1944, the Battalion left Esch for a new station. The citizens of Esch lined the streets on that chilly winter day to bid us a fond farewell. Many of the women folk, both young and old, concealed handkerchiefs in their hands which they used to wipe moistened eyes when they thought no one was looking. We hated to leave, for it had been just so when we left home for the Army, so many months ago.

On November 3, 1944, we arrived in Raeren, Belgium and once more pitched tents to live out in the open air. Rain and snow and rapid thaws soon turned the area into a knee deep pool of liquid mud. A strict blackout had to be maintained because of the nearness of the front.

On November 14, 1944 we left Raeren for a new station — Germeter, Germany and the front. At last we were to participate in knocking a hole in Hitler's vaunted Siegfried line. There was no shelling and we moved into Vossnach, Germany without

any casualties. At 1930 hours the Second Ranger Battalion relieved the 2nd Battalion of the 112th Infantry Regiment of the 28th Division. This would be a cinch if the weather was not so miserable; although this particular sector was supposed to be hot because of the aggressiveness of the enemy.

The Americans had been pushed out of Schmidt, a vital road on the road to Cologne, only three miles from Vossnack. When Charlie Company men were situated in their fox holes the enemy opened up. Every imaginable kind of artillery, mortar, and rocket fire was thrown at us. Just before daylight, we quietly withdrew from our foxholes to the safety of the basements of the ruined buildings in town. From these basements, the surrounding area was under observation at all times during daylight hours, so that the enemy could not launch a surprise counterattack or send any patrols into our lines. At night we moved back into our foxholes so as to prevent any enemy attempts of infiltration into our lines. Pfc. Robert Innella and Pfc. Jack Landess were both slightly wounded in Vossnack, the only two casualties Charlie Company suffered. It was a good percentage, when you take it into consideration, the fact that we were under heavy artillery, mortar, rocket, and small arms fire the moment we arrived until we were relieved. It seemed sheer madness to remain in Vossnack, so heavy was the enemy fire.

On the 19th of November, we were relieved (we mean relieved!) by the 3rd Battalion of the 28th Infantry Regiment of the 8th Division. We sure felt sorry for those boys. We moved by foot to a rear area and felt very safe and thanked God for bringing us back. In the morning we bivouacked in the woods, part of the Huertgen Forrest and dug shallow slit trenches with limbs of pine boughs

over the tops of them to keep out the snow and rain. That first morning artillery shells scattered all over the area and each roof was reinforced with two or three layers of logs anywhere from three to twelve inches in diameter. We were shelled daily at any hour of the day, without warning, and it was difficult to keep from developing a good case of war nerves. During one of these shellings Pfc. Dominick Paolucci was wounded in the left hand.

Whenever possible, the Rangers were briefed on the whole European War situation. We were told where the Allies were attacking, where the enemy was putting up his strongest resistance, whether the enemy troops were poor or excellent soldiers in a certain sector and, in general, everything that would bring a man's mind up to date and to help make him a better soldier. While one such orientation was taking place on December 6, 1944, an enemy artillery shell burst in a tree directly over the group. As a result, Cpl. Otto K. Stephens and Pfc. James Maher of Detroit, Michigan were killed. The men who were wounded were:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Capt. Ralph E. Goranson | • Pfc. Joseph Mooney |
| • Sgt. Raymond Middleton | • S/Sgt. Donald L. Scribner |
| • 1st Sgt. Charles Kennedy | • Pfc. George Disko |
| • Pfc. Gerald Sejba | • Sgt. Joseph Angyal |
| • T/Sgt. George Morrow | • Pfc. George Bock |

Three days later the "Stars and Stripes," the ETO soldier's Bible, told the story of the awarding of the DSC, the nation's second highest award, to Cpl. Stephens for conspicuous bravery and gallantry above and beyond the call of duty, on June 6, 1944 at Vierville sur Mer, France.

That same night, December 6th, the Battalion once again put into the line this time in Bergstein, Germany and Hill 400. Hill 400 was an important objective because any troops occupying it had perfect observation for 15 miles around, and in the direction of Cologne itself was a perfect view. Two Regimental Combat Teams had tried to take the hill twice before, but each attempt was a failure. The hill was V Corps objective and it had to be wrested from the enemy, regardless of the cost.

We detrucked about six miles from our objective and began to proceed on foot. The night was pitch black and the weather was miserable. Half rain and half snow was drenching us to the bone and enemy artillery fire made us eat mud about every four or five steps. Colonel Rudder walked up and down the column almost all night encouraging us and also said, "When you get there dig and dig deep, boys." The road to Bergstein was cluttered with knocked out American tanks, TD's and half-tracks, verifying the accuracy and intensity of enemy artillery fire.

This was the plan of attack which was followed: Able, Baker, and Charlie Companies were to move into position on the right flank of the Hill under cover of darkness and without any artillery preparations, so as not to tip off our hand to the enemy and let him know that an attack was in making. The left flank was secured by another unit. Companies D, E, and F under cover of darkness were to move into position and be prepared to attack the Hill in the daylight hours of the morning. An overall artillery barrage was laid down on the Hill for several hours before dawn. When the barrage was lifted, D, E, and F companies were to attack the Hill under a rolling artillery barrage. All artillery units were Corps Artillery from 105's to giant 204's.

When Charlie Company moved to a knoll, the position they were to occupy, the knoll had about three shell holes in it. We got into position at 0430 in the morning and began to dig in. The soil was very rocky and hard to dig in. At 0630 hours we were in our shallow slit trenches which was as deep as we could go. When daylight came, the enemy observers sighted us and began to lay in with artillery and mortars. Things got so rough that the men lay on their stomachs and bored into the rocky ground. There was no unnecessary lifting of heads and most men rolled over on their sides to answer the calls of nature. It was the most horrible barrage of artillery this Battalion had ever been subjected to.

Companies D, E, and F, began their attack as per schedule. Hill 400 was taken in one half hour with four casualties suffered by the attackers, the only casualties suffered by the Battalion at that time. Before the Companies had time to dig in, the enemy began to lay down intense artillery, mortar, and SP fire. The wounded could not be evacuated and the 1st Platoon of Charlie Company and the mortar section of the 2nd Platoon were called upon to act as litter bearers and also haul up food and ammo to the troops on the Hill. The Battalion was under heavy fire for 39 hours in the positions they occupied and before they were relieved they had 115 more casualties, in addition to the four already mentioned or 119 in all. At this point, the Second Ranger Battalion had made the furthestmost penetration into Germany of any allied troops to date.

Captain Block, our medical officer, and one of the best liked officer in the Battalion, was instantly killed in this engagement. Thirty-day furlough to the states were granted to 11 men while we were in Bergstein and the men were scared to come out for fear they would get hit and thus cancel their furlough. The knoll occupied by C Company was so covered with shell holes that one could not stand in any one hole and take one step without falling into another shell hole.

The story of the two brothers in F Company as one of the tragic stories of the war. The oldest brother had joined the Battalion in Tennessee and had been through all major engagements that the Battalion been in and was considered

a very good soldier by his CO, and by the other boys in his Company. He had a younger brother in another outfit nearby and he had Colonel Rudder get his brother in the Rangers in the same squad he was in. The brothers had been united for four days when the Battalion went into Bergstein. Under heavy artillery fire, both brothers ran for cover toward a pill box and both were killed instantly by the same shell. The eldest brother's last earthly act was to fall on his younger brother's body so as to offer protection to him.

On December 8th, the Battalion, their mission accomplished, was relieved by the 3rd Battalion, 13th Infantry Regiment of the 8th Infantry Division. In Bergstein, the casualties suffered by Charlie Company:

KILLED IN ACTION

- Pfc. Robert C. Innella
- Pvt. Lawrence Holloway

WOUNDED IN ACTION

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| • T/Sgt. Maynard J. Priesman | • Pfc. James Parsons |
| • S/Sgt. Charles Flanagan | • Pfc. Michael Gargas |
| • S/Sgt. Elijah D. Dycus Jr. | • Pfc. Edward Shermeyer |
| • S/Sgt. Richard G. Garrett | • Pfc. Frank Celis |
| • S/Sgt. Joseph Wetzel | • Pfc. Egbert Queen |
| • S/Sgt. Matthew J. Wyder | • Pfc. Charles Fulford |
| • Pfc. Horst Eichelroth | • Pfc. Edward E. Dressel |
| • Pfc. Boyd C. Max | • T/5 Lambert (Medic attached) |
| • Pfc. Conrad E. Rice | |

Back in Germeter and the Huertgen Forrest, we occupied the same dugouts that we had before we departed for Bergstein. Here Colonel Rudder was made a full Colonel and was ordered to be transferred to the 109th Infantry Regiment of the 28th Division as Regimental Commander. When Colonel Rudder left, Captain Williams assumed command of the Second Ranger Battalion and soon he was promoted to the rank of Major. Passes to Eupen and Paris were liberally issued to the Battalion in this area.

On December 16, the date of the beginning of the big German counteroffensive, the Battalion entrucked and moved to Lammersdorf. From Lammersdorf they went into Simmerath, riding on light tanks and were shelled moderately. Once in Simmerath, the Battalion set up a defensive position. We lived in cellars and made out as best as could be expected. The shelling increased each day but the enemy made no attempt to attack. On December 21st, Pfc.

Walter F. Kacala was captured and listed as Missing in Action. On Christmas Eve, Pfc. William Sluss was killed in action.

Christmas day was spent on the line, but the Battalion managed to serve us hot turkey sandwiches and coffee. Charlie Company had very few men left in Simmerath and it was here that replacements were received. They took their places with veterans and performed their duties as though they had years of combat experience. On December 30th, 30th Company lost two good men: S/ Sgt. Brownie L. Bolin and S/Sgt. Paul B. Byzon who were both wounded while setting out booby traps. And so Charlie Company rang out the old year, 1944, and welcomed the new year, 1945, on the lines in Simmerath, Germany, on the chain of villages in the Siegfried line.

On January 2, 1945, the Battalion was relieved and we were moved to a rear area, this being the first rest we had since November when we went into the Huertgen Forrest. The rear was a factory building in Rotgen, Germany. After spending six days here, the Battalion moved to Schmidthof, Germany into former Jerry barracks. In Schmidthof, new men were assigned to the Company and a training schedule was once again in force. The schedule included much night work, demolitions, and field problems. What free evenings we did have we spent in the movies run by the Battalion, or in the beer hall that had been set up by the boys.

On February 5, 1945, we left Schmidthof for Wollsiefen, Germany. Here in cooperation with the 9th Infantry Division and the 78th Infantry Division, the 2nd Ranger Battalion had the mission of taking the Schwammanuel Dam on the Roer River. The Dam was a vitally important objective. If the Germans succeeded in blowing up the Dam, the release of this water would hold up operations in the vicinity of Julich, Germany, for the First Army was driving towards its objective, Cologne. If the operation was held up, it would give the Germans a chance to reorganize and bring in reinforcements and consequently, we would lose much time, men and tons of material before Cologne was taken.

Because something failed to jive in the plans, the taking of the Dam was postponed two times for 24 hours each and finally was postponed all together for an indefinite period. On February 8th we arrived in Kalterherberg, Germany, a beat up, war torn village and were billeted in the houses that were still standing. We began training again, this time for the crossing of the Roer River. The CO of the Battalion knew we had to cross the river in the near future and he had made the problems as realistic as possible. The weather was still cold and wet and everyone waited for favorable weather and the expected big push.

On February 23rd, the Battalion moved to Dendenborn, another torn village and Charlie Company was billeted in one large building. The Second Ranger Battalion at this time was attached to the 102d Cavalry Group which included

the 102d Cavalry, the 38th Cavalry, the 62d Field Artillery Battalion, and the Second Ranger Battalion. Companies A, B, and C were to work with the 38th Cavalry and Companies D, E, and F were to work with the 102d Cavalry. The problems that were run in Dendenborn mostly stressed cooperation between Cavalry and the Rangers.

On March 2, 1945, A, B, and C Companies moved out of Dendenborn towards the front. D, E, and F Companies in the early morning of the same day, had crossed the Roer River, one mile southeast of the city of Roerburg, Germany. At 1130 hours, A, B, and C Companies with C Company leading, waded the Roer at the same spot. We advanced two miles before we contacted the enemy. At that time the three companies were subjected to moderate mortar fire, but no casualties were suffered. The 1st Platoon sent out a patrol lead by Lt. Kucinski in order to find out the enemy disposition, strength, etc. The patrol had advanced about 700 yards when a Jerry machine gun opened on them from the right front. Cpl. Peter Bubanovich was killed instantly. While the machine gun had the patrol pinned down, the Jerries tried to finish off the rest with 120mm mortar fire. Lt. Kucinski, Sgt. Belcher, and Pfc. Isaac Brilley were all wounded by the mortar fire. The patrol withdrew to our MLR successfully and soon our mortars were busy in firing at the Jerry mortar and machine gun positions. Night was falling fast and so it was decided to set up a defensive position where we were. The area was heavily mined and B Company lost three men that night while they were getting into position. Snow fell during the night and most of the men were half frozen because they only had one blanket per man to cover themselves with.

Early the following morning, Lt. Kahle, with one assault section from the 2nd Platoon, went out on a patrol. Two prisoners were taken and an outpost was set up 1,000 yards in front of our MLR and maintained throughout the day. In the late afternoon, A, B, and C moved out, with C Company again the point Company. Our objective was the town of Germunde. After advancing about one

half mile, contact was made with the 2nd Infantry Division which had forward elements already in Germunde. We dug in for the night in a forest, just outside of the town of Germunde.

March 4, 1945, at 0200 hours we were rudely interrupted from our peaceful slumber and informed to pack up and get ready to move. We walked about six miles and there joined the 38th Cavalry. Volumes of books could be written about this association and the events that were to follow, but, due to the lack of time only the highlights will be mentioned here.



CHAPTER VI:

RHINELAND

Company C was attached to B Troop, 38th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron. At 0855 hours on March 1st, we moved out and seized the town of Hergarten. We had no trouble in getting into the town and soon we set up a defensive line there and settled down to await further orders. Some Jerries were spied about three quarters of a mile away on a hill and it was decided to flank them with a mounted patrol of light tanks, armored cars, and armored Bantams. As the patrol was about to leave town the Jerries cut loose on them with AT guns and 120 mortars. When the patrol was momentarily pinned down, the 1st Platoon with the first section and the mortar section on foot and the 2nd section, mounted on half-tracks, set out to flank the enemy from the other side. The first section made contact with the enemy and soon a hot fire fight was taking place. The section with the aid of our mortars continued to advance and soon routed the enemy from their positions. The section then occupied the enemy positions and were subjected to heavy mortar and artillery fire. Sgt. Belcher and Pfc. Homer Johnson were both wounded by the mortar fire. The second Section of the 1st Platoon mounted on halftracks sighted enemy observers on a hill about 1,500 yards away, and the halftracks opened up on the observer with their 50 cal. machine guns. Armored cars came up and reinforced the tracks and 37mm fire from the armored cars was brought to bear on the observers. Soon the enemy artillery fire ceased to be accurate and became sporadic.

The 1st section of the 2nd Platoon moved out on foot to secure the high ground left of Hergarten. On the route up to the high ground, the section was subjected to heavy mortar fire by 120mm mortars. Sgt. Angyal, and Garrett were wounded by the mortar fire. Pfc. Albert Malich was almost buried alive by one round but suffered no severe wounds. The Section knocked out a machine gun nest,

killed one Jerry and captured three PWs including an artillery observer. They set up a defensive position on the high ground and maintained this position in a cold miserable rain until relieved late that night. Late that night a Jerry came out of his hiding place and wounded Sgt. Brownie L. Bolin when Brownie challenged him.

The next morning after a breakfast of one pancake and a cup of sugarless watery coffee the company moved out. We seized the town of Schwefen and took 21 prisoners without any opposition. March 6th we moved to Lessenich and that night we moved out to secure a high hill that might be held by Jerry for observation purposes.

We climbed steadily for about five hours on that pitch black morning and at 0530 that morning we were in position. Snow fell during the day and we spent the majority of the day freezing because fires were "verboten."

March 7th, we reinforced B Company who engaged the enemy and seized Altenahr. Here the Company maintained defensive positions securing bridges across the Ahr River. The 2nd Platoon went into the hills and took over the job of guarding a string of tunnel which the Jerries used for underground factories and also housed a large switchboard and generator which supplied the power for miles around.

On March 11th, we were relieved and moved into billets in Mayschose, Germany. We were in a grape growing region of Germany and many bottles of wine, champagne, and sparkling burgundy were consumed to make life a bit more pleasant. A training schedule was followed here with night marches and firing problems being stressed. In Maychose, Sgt. Belcher and Pfc. Vernon Cornwell both left the Company within one week's time for 45 day furloughs to the states. Many midnight fish fries and clam bakes were enjoyed in the 1st Platoon's kitchen with Sgt. Gross officiating as 1st Cook.

By now every man in the Company knew the basic grammar of the German language and no man ever went thirsty or hungry because milk and champagne, wine, schnapps, eggs, bread,



chicken, and cook were the first German words he learned. On March 26th, we again joined B troop of the 38th Cavalry and crossed the Rhine River. We crossed it at Honnigen on the east bank of the Rhine on the longest tactical pontoon bridge ever build in the world. We proceeded to Vallendar, Germany and relieved the 27th Armored Infantry Battalion setting up a defensive position on a high hill. The next day we moved to Holzapple and prepared a defensive position there that we maintained throughout the night. March 28, we moved to Diez where we crossed the Lahn River on a submerged barge that was converted into a foot bridge. We relieved the 60th Armored Infantry Battalion of the 9th Armored Division in defensive positions east and north of the town. From our positions we could see a former PW camp which had housed many Americans part of whom were liberated in this drive. In a little town just in the outskirts of Diez, the Company discovered a former Hitler Youth School and beaucoup war souvenirs were collected by the boys.

CHAPTER VII:
GERMANY

From Diez, we moved to three towns: Wolfenhausen, Rechtenbach, and Nauborn where we stayed one night in each town. April 1, 1945, we moved through Fritzlar on our way to Haddamar. With the Cavalry we set up check points on strategic main highways, and picked up some stray Wehrmacht stragglers from day to day.

The 1st Platoon was billeted in Haddamar and the 2nd Platoon in Kirchberg. On April 9th, we left Haddamar and played one night stands in Eschenrode, Hetzershausen, Haynrode, and Hain. April 13th we arrived in Gatterstadt for a two-day stay. The Company outposted the town and sent both mounted and dismounted patrols in every direction with the result of 18 PWs being picked up. A section of the 2nd Platoon was billeted in a German Baron's castle and what the castle cellar didn't yield isn't worth mentioning. The 1st Platoon got acquainted with some real "aged" Pollack giggle water. After a few drinks of the stuff, the Polish slave worker who gave the drink to the 1st Platoon, explained that it had been distilled at four o'clock that afternoon and since now it was after seven in the evening, the stuff was aged and ready to drink.

April 15th and to the 20th was spent in BadLauchstadt anci Benkendf. While in Benkendf, combat and reconnaissance patrols were sent out. On one of these combat patrols, Pfc. Carl Day and Pfc. Willie H. Day were slightly wounded in action. April 21st to April 25th was spent in Behlitz-Ehrenburg,

Golien and Lossa. April 25th, the entire Battalion moved into apartment houses in Mucheln. Four days were spent there with the majority of the time being allotted to the care and cleaning of equipment and getting out gear into shape. April 29th we moved to Almesbach to await further orders. May 2, 1945 in the vicinity of Mengensreuth, we began the tiresome task of scouring dense woods for German guerrillas, who were menacing our supply lines. Other woods in the vicinity of Durnnhieb were cleaned out, the following day before we moved back to Almesbach.

On May 7th, 1945, we left Almesbach, Germany and arrived in Dolreuth, Czechoslovakia. Once more we were in a liberated country and no more 65.00 dollar fines for fraternization to worry about. Czech citizens lined the streets, shouting and waving flags enthusiastically and everyone thought "here comes our well earned good time." After a week in Czechoslovakia, amongst females who had "a handful of gimme and mouthful of thank you" and snipe diving males, we changed our opinion and wanted to be on the move once again. On May 10th we moved to Oplot, Czechoslovakia and on May 11th we left the Cavalry and moved to Dolni Lukavice, Czechoslovakia. Pup tents pitched in field and the Battalion took up garrison duties.

From June 6, 1944 until cessation of hostilities, the Second Ranger Battalion received the following decorations:

Distinguished Service Cross	18
Silver Star	77
Bronze Star	67
Purple Heart	585
British Military Medal	2

The Purple Heart list does not include those given out through hospitals, but just the number awarded through the Battalion. If those Purple Hearts awarded in hospitals were included in the list, the number would run near to 900.

Of this number C Company has received:

Distinguished Service Cross	5
Silver Star	10
Bronze Star	10
Purple Heart	126

Four men have received Battlefield Commissions, namely: 2nd Lt. Leonard G. Lomell, 2nd Lt. John W. White, 2nd Lt. Joseph L. Stevens and 2nd Lt. Manning I. Rubenstein. In addition, two C Company men, William R. Lindsay, and James S. Dickerson went to O.C.S. in France and are back in the Battalion as Second Lieutenants.

The following is the complete roster of Charlie Company and these men helped bring the war to a victorious end.

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • Capt. Ralph E. Goranson | • Pfc. Joseph D. Anderson | • Pfc. John R. Miller Jr. |
| • 1 Lt. Adrian L. Kahle | • Pfc. Donald G. Barrett | • Pfc. Alden G. Mosher |
| • 1 Lt. Edward S. Kubinski | • Pfc. Isaac Briley | • Pfc. Paul D. Mosher |
| • 2 Lt. Manning I. Rubenstein | • Pfc. Lawrence B. Ciccarelli | • Pfc. Martin L. Nier |
| | • Pfc. Luke Constantinides | • Pfc. Leroy W. Noble |
| • 1 Sgt. Maynard J. Priesman | • Pfc. Billie D. Coonce | • Pfc. Robert J. Pospeshil Sr. |
| • T/Sgt. George W. Morrow | • Pfc. Carl Day | • Pfc. Morris D. Poynter |
| • S/Sgt. Elijah D. Dycus Jr. | • Pfc. Frank Desiante | • Pfc. Hardy Prentiss |
| • S/Sgt. Charles C. Flanagan | • Pfc. George Disko | • Pfc. David G. Randolph |
| • S/Sgt. Richard G. Garrett | • Pfc. Dennis F. Doster | • Pfc. Conrad E. Rice Jr. |
| • S/Sgt. Charles C. Gross | • Pfc. Charles E. Fulford | • Pfc. George F. Ross |
| • S/Sgt. Marvin D. Kirk | • Pfc. Gilbert M. Gamboa | • Pfc. William C. Sherbanik |
| • S/Sgt. Marvin O. Lutz | • Pfc. Michael Gargus | • Pfc. Dale W. Schleusener |
| • S/Sgt. Oliver E. Reed | • Pfc. Elmer F. Hebbeler | • Pfc. Gerald O. Sejba |
| • S/Sgt. Donald L. Sribner | • Pfc. Lloyd L. Hines | • Pfc. John Scammon |
| • S/Sgt. Charles J. Semchuek | • Pfc. Leroy L. Johnstcn | • Pfc. Arnold Smith |
| • Sgt. Joseph Angyal | • Pfc. Kenneth R. Kadoun | • Pfc. Lawrence J. Smith |
| • Sgt. Edward E. Dressel | • Pfc. Fred Davidson | • Pfc. Edwin M. Sorvisto |
| • Sgt. Horst A. Eichelroth | • Pfc. Charles F. Kennedy | • Pfc. Martin J. Wilp |
| • Sgt. Walter R. Frost | • Pfc. Francis J. Kerepka | • Pfc. John Yadlosky |
| • Sgt. Roy J. Jarrett | • Pfc. Leonard J. Kopicko | • Pfc. J. D. Williams |
| • Sgt. Egbert G. Queen | • Pfc. Jack Landess | • Pfc. Richard Zack |
| • Sgt. Elmer P. Watkins | • Pfc. David W. Larsen | • Pfc. Stanley A. Zarka |
| • Cpl. Daniel W. Chapmac | • Pfc. John J. McNally | • Pfc. Thorpe T. Coope1 |
| • Cpl. Leon W. Fisk | • Pfc. Albert R. Malich | • Pfc. Willie H. Day |
| • Cpl. John B. Nanista | • Pfc. Earl A. Masters | • Pfc. Michael J. Pruchroiewicz |
| • Cpl. Peter P. Simich | • Pfc. Richard H. Maxwell | |
| • T/5 Steve Stepancevich | • Pfc. Alton V. Miller | |

Now the rumors are flying thick and fast. *"We will go home as a unit," "We will stay here for the Army of Occupation," "How many points have you got?" "C-47's are going to fly us back to the States next week,"* and so it goes. Whatever happens now it is up to the Big Brass to decide, but we are confident that whatever job the Second Ranger Battalion is assigned to undertake, will come through with flying colors as we have in the past.

“IT IS A HOLY AND WHOLESOME THOUGHT TO PRAY FOR THE DEAD”

The Rangers gathered in little village church in a far off land on Tuesday, the 15th of May, to honor the men of the Battalion who died so that others might live to enjoy that Peace that is to come.

The ancient ritual, strange to many, awe-inspiring to all, moved majestically through its chants and recitations. Time stood still and events of long ago were vividly recalled as, through our nearness to God, those whom we once knew were with us in spirit once more. A realization of the immortality of the Soul grew strong within us as, in English, Czech, and Latin, the theme of the Mass of

Requiem, “Eternal Rest grant unto them, O Lord” echoed and re-echoed from the hallowed walls of the ancient Shrine.

An hour had scarcely passed when we joined with the Chaplain in our closing prayer to our Lord. With bowed heads, we walked out into the brilliant sunshine, still joined in thought with the friends we once knew. Through God’s help, a chain of thought had been forged that will serve to make those of us who now celebrate Victory forever indebted to those whose sacrifice made Victory possible. As the passage of time begins to dim the stark reality that

is the horror of War, it shall be A Ranger Pledge never to forget this memory of the price they had to pay. Those Rangers whom we grieve for now, realizing that we shall keep this pledge, will lie at rest content — content in the knowledge that the cause for which they so gallantly gave their all will be taken up by other Rangers who will bear the flaming torch of Liberty and Decency to wherever it is needed in this world of today, returning it when the task is done to America, the land from whence it first was kindled. This resolve makes real the prayers we have said.

**“MAY THEY REST IN PEACE.
AMEN.”**

INVASION DAY

To you in this world who do not know,
In this verse I will attempt to show,
What took place the American way,
For this is the story of INVASION DAY.

Although this is written in a poet’s style,
I will admit I’m no Ernie Pyle,
But, dear reader, just to convey to you,
All these words are authentic and true.

From England we sailed all ships at sea,
For across the channel were countries to free.
We jammed on to assault craft, frail and small,
Ready to storm Hitler’s impregnable wall.

Months of training, our goal in sight,
We were tense and ready to fight.
And as the surfs roar increased in sound,
Came the order, “All ramps down.”

But many of our comrades did not answer the call,
They did not near, they were the first to fall.
For a few enemy shells scored direct hits
And many of our comrades were blown to bits.

As we scrambled from ship to shore,
Came the sound we learned to abhor,
For on the beach all hell broke loose
And we were though as a neck in a noose.

Enemy machine guns, sprayed the contested ground
And the artillery pounded, round after round.
Their mortars were putting in their best bet
As the snipers picked what the rest couldn’t get.

As we swept forward into the attack,
The enemy fought furiously to hurl us back;
But our Navy and Air Corps did their job well
For the enemy was feeling the fury of hell.

With grim determination, we hurled against
concrete and steel
At last the enemy were beginning to kneel.
We now realized our first goal was won,
But still a greater job was to be done.

Wave after wave of our troops poured in
And a great number died in the battle’s din,
And with young blood, the toll we did pay,
For this was the price of INVASION DAY.